

Turtles and the Law

Jim Howell, DVM
ISDH Veterinary Epidemiologist

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned the sale of pet turtles, terrapins, and tortoises with a carapace (shell) less than four inches in length since the 1970s. This ban was instigated because these small turtles are known carriers of *Salmonella* and have been associated with outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections in people, especially children, over the years. The regulations governing the actions that the FDA may take can be reviewed at:

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?FR=1240.62>.

In addition to the four-inch rule, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) also prohibits (with some exceptions) the sale or transport of several species of reptile and amphibians native to Indiana. Turtles and terrapins include:

- Common snapping turtle
- Smooth soft-shell turtle
- Spiny soft-shell turtle
- Alligator snapping turtle
- Eastern mud turtle
- Musk turtle
- Midland painted turtle
- Western painted turtle
- Spotted turtle
- Blanding's turtle
- Map turtle
- False map turtle
- Ouachita map turtle
- Ornate box turtle
- Red eared slider

For assistance in identifying individual turtle species, pictures are available at www.chicagoherp.org. The complete DNR rules on this subject can be viewed at <http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/endangered/turtles.htm>.